April 5, 2006

Mr. Bill Brattain
California Regional Water Quality Control Board
Central Valley Region
11020 Sun Center Drive #200
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670-6114

RE: General Waste Discharge Requirements---Draft

Dear Mr. Brattain,

I am writing as a concerned compost producer regarding the proposal of a new regulation. We currently operate three permitted facilities, two of which are in Stanislaus County and the other is in Yolo County. We started learning about composting, due to the large amounts of organic material we were producing in our Landscape and Nursery Operations, in 1990. We received our first compost facility permit in 1994. We have set up our facilities on compacted soil pads. The pads have about 1% slope to cross drains and the water is then channeled via drainage sloughs to a drain basin that is designed for at least a 50 year storm event. Since the drain basin at our Vernalis site was built, it has never even approached 50% full.

With all of our operations, we are receiving and processing over 250,000 tons of green material and construction wood. This material is processed into Wonder Grow Premium Compost and mulches, both natural and colored. Our sites are inspected monthly by the California Integrated Waste Management Board with consistently favorable reports.

I am very concerned in reading the draft regulation that we would be required to pave our sites, which would involve paving over 100 acres. This would be prohibitive financially. *We did pave 2 acres at* one of our sites last year at a cost of nearly $300,000.00. To extrapolate 100 acres x 150,000/Ac. = $15,000,000.00. This cost is not justified by an operation that is only generating about 5% profit. In other words, our only option would be to close our compost sites. The other concern would be, even if it were feasible financially, in order to comply, we would have to void our contracts with the cities of Northern California, improve the facility, and then in a year try to get the contracts back. This would undoubtedly be impossible.

If there was any evidence that our compost operation was harming the ground water, we could understand the need for these regulations. To date, we have no evidence that this is

true. We test our compost regularly for quality of nutrients and for heavy metals or pathogeons with consistently favorable results.

Storm runoff water testing has not, to date, detected problems. Our sites are graded to prevent storm water from offsite flowing onto the properties and all storm runoff is contained on site.

For several years Grover Landscape Services operated a permitted site in San Joaquin County. The owner sold this site for development and we vacated the site. In doing so, we removed all compost and improvements and had the soil tested by an outside lab to satisfy the Central Valley Water Quality Control Board. This site was developed like our other sites and was used to produce compost for several years. The site soil was proved to be clean upon testing.

About three years ago, we did a pilot windrow under the direction of the CIWMB, CRWQCB, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and Stanislaus County. The soil was tested under the windrow before it was built. The windrow was turned through the composting cycle. We used water from Tartaric Manufacturing on this windrow. After the completion of the compost process, the windrow was removed. The soil was tested under the windrow with the result that there was no difference in the soil test before the windrow and after the windrow was completed.

One final consideration, in Grover Landscape Services maintenance operation we apply compost or some other form of carbon to absorb the herbicide if there is any fertilizer or herbicide damage to a lawn area and then we replant. In our agricultural application of compost we observe the compost neutralizing the effects of herbicide used in strip spraying of orchards or vineyards. This affinity of the carbon in the compost to tie up the herbicide and the microbes to break down the herbicide yields a real benefit to the environment. In like manner, the layer of compost on all of our windrow pads would intercept and neutralize any herbicide residue before it could contact the water table 100 feet below.

In summary, I support the need for protection of water quality both ground water and our surface waters. It seems site location, soil type and depth to ground water are the most important considerations. Other considerations that should be sufficient in our experience are:

1. Site graded to ensure storm water runoff to a drainage basin.
2. Sufficient storage capacity from a 25-year storm season with extra free board.
3. Site compacted so it is all weather and relatively impervious.
4. Testing of water in the drainage basin yearly to prevent contamination of soil by harmful leachate.
5. If leachate is proven to be a problem require lined basins.
6. Allow only green material or other organic agricultural material or liquid that meet benign organic standards rather than prohibiting all liquids.
7. Require the application of water to be at point of incorporation with the turner to prevent excess water on the soil between the windows.

Will you please, inform me, if there will be a public hearing on this draft proposal? The CRWQCB is welcome to visit our site if this would be beneficial. Please, contact me if you have any questions or require additional information regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Mark S. Grover
President